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INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL DURBAN
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UNCLAS PRETORIA 001426

DEPT FOR OES/PCI, OES/ENV, AND AF/S

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [SOCI](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: KWAZULU NATAL - THE GREENING OF A PROVINCE

¶1. Summary. The Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany Hotspot, a floristic, climatic and geologically complex area, runs throughout KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province. EST Officer met with KZN Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs (DAEA) Environmental Services (South Region) Manager Sharon Allan, and with DAEA eThekweni District (metropolitan Durban) Office Manager Asia Khan for a wide-ranging discussion of environmental activities within KZN on March 31, 2008. Two provincial inspectors recently completed Environmental Management Inspector (EMI) training. DAEA concentrates on awareness building, rather than strict enforcement. EThekweni District sponsors several capacity and awareness building programs, including an innovative indigenous tree promotion program. That program has provided free trees and training to over 8,000 homes in the southern portion of KZN. End Summary.

KZN - A BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

¶2. Conservation International (CI) has classified the entire east coast of South Africa from the southern tip of Mozambique to the Eastern Cape Province as the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany Hotspot. CI notes that the region is floristically, climatically and geologically complex. Vegetation in the region includes forests, bushveld and grasslands. Approximately eighty percent of South Africa's remaining forests are found here. According to CI, these forests have the highest tree diversity of any temperate forest in the world. There are also succulent stem flora, three types of thicket, six types of bushveld and five types of grasslands.

KZN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICES (DAEA)
PROVIDE MYRIAD OF SERVICES

¶3. EST Officer met with KZN Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs (DAEA) Environmental Services (South Region) Manager Sharon Allan, and with DAEA representatives from the eThekweni District on March 31, 2008. (Note. The eThekweni Metropolitan District is the Municipality created in 2000 that includes the city of Durban and all the surrounding suburbs and towns. It is one of the eleven districts of KZN province and the majority of its three million plus residents (2001 census) speak Zulu. End Note.) DAEA provides agricultural, environmental and conservation services to promote progressive agricultural land use, food security and environmentally sustainable livelihoods. The eThekweni 2002-2006 Integrated Development Plan requires planning, developing and managing Durban in an integrated and sustainable way that does not exceed the carrying capacity of the natural environment.

¶4. DAEA sponsors programs removing invasive species, and promoting biodiversity. DAEA links its efforts with local government entities. Allan noted that the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) defined activities that require the province to conduct Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs). The provincial MEC and the DEAT minister may identify additional activities requiring an EIA or may specify certain geographic regions where specified activities may not be undertaken due to environmental sensitivity.

¶5. Allan noted that the eThekweni district handles approximately 35% of all KZN EIA assessments. The office initially lacked capacity to conduct all the NEMA-required EIAs. Two provincial inspectors recently completed Environmental Management Inspector (EMI, aka the Green Scorpions) training and an additional two have been assigned from DEAT to assist.

¶6. District Office Manager Asia Khan said her office concentrates on environmental education, awareness, capacity building and empowerment, rather than strictly enforcement. One EMI handles compliance, monitoring and enforcement; the other deals with waste and pollution. Khan believes that education and the empowerment of local communities will bring greater compliance over the long term.

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DAEA SCHOOL PROGRAMS GROWING RAPIDLY THROUGHOUT PROVINCE
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¶7. DAEA operates several programs promoting public awareness, including eco-school projects, environmental art poster contests for local schools, school aquarium building competitions, and workshops to build capacity/awareness for teachers. Fifty schools within eThekweni participated in environmental education programs in 2007. Eighteen schools achieved "green flag" status in 2007 and sixty-nine achieved that status in 2008. (Note. Green Flag status denotes schools that have integrated environment into the curriculum and have conducted at least three environmental projects during the

school year. End Note.)

¶8. One key DAEA program is "Siyazilimela" (We are growing) which has now been incorporated in 50 schools throughout the province. This project promotes food farms at local schools; agribusiness and marketing experts also provide advice to the schools on both crop selection and marketing. The school with the highest sales figure wins a trophy. Provincial officials visit each school in the program at least three times during the year to insure the school receives the necessary support and assistance.

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DAEA COMBATS ADVERSE IMPACTS CAUSED BY HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS
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¶9. Khan noted that housing development projects, especially those for low-cost homes, "flatten everything" during construction. Khan commented that these projects often include 6,000 houses and have a "severe" environmental impact. She commented that housing developments are increasingly being built on land previously used for agriculture, which negatively impacts food security within the province.

¶10. DAEA promotes an indigenous tree program, proving one indigenous fruit tree per household at a cost of R180 per tree. This program also supplies seeds for small food gardens and medicinal plant seedlings. Workshops in both farming and marketing are held for all participants. Khan commented that most participants are first-time farmers with no knowledge of gardening techniques. The program also trains interested participants in techniques used in medicinal plant nurseries.

¶11. Khan and Allan said the program is more than mere skills-building; it also promotes self-esteem and pride of ownership. The program has been introduced in four areas of KZN; over 8,000 homes have received a tree. The program will expand inland towards Pietermaritzburg and up the coast towards Tugela in ¶2009. Allan noted that the northern area of KZN uses a different methodology because the geography and geology is more complex, making both construction and the "greening" of housing projects more difficult. At present, the northern section of the province has two active indigenous tree programs involving 1,500 homes.

¶12. DAEA sponsors a "Quality Living Environment" program working with micro-organizations within communities. Allan said the goal of this program is to find ways communities can work together to maintain biodiversity, conserve natural resources, restore biodiversity that has been destroyed, and encourage sustainable

development. DAEA chooses one person for each group of twenty-five households and trains that person for three months in biodiversity management, environmental practices and community support. Allan noted that the program produces skilled people who can monitor and evaluate projects, educate community groups and become private contractors. Allan said the project encourages pride in ownership and self-esteem. Residents learn to make home repairs and achieve additional financial independence by tending small garden crops.

¶13. DAEA provides financing for solar panels for some low-cost houses at a cost of R11,000 (\$1,375) per home. Khan notes that the solar panel reduces energy costs to the resident by about R400-500 (\$50 - \$65) per month. Allen commented that DAEA also has a program educating residents about energy efficient appliances.

COMMENT: GREENING THE PROVINCE ONE HOUSE AT A TIME

¶14. DAEA is fully committed to the dual goals of promoting sustainable development and encouraging environmentally sound practices. DAEA believes the best way to accomplish these goals is by showing residents why environmentally sound practices are beneficial to them. DAEA has made a substantial financial commitment. Its programs involve thousands of homes, and almost seventy schools. DAEA's far-reaching impact is a tribute to the commitment of its small but highly dedicated staff.

TEITELBAUM